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Elizabeth Harrison

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Kindergarten

Talks and Tales

... BY ...

Elizabeth Harrison

The Caterpillar and Butterfly



THE CATERPILLAR AND BUTTERFLY

ADAPTED BY
ELIZABETH HARRISON.
AUTHOR OF "A STUDY OF CHILD NATURE," "A VISION
OF DANTE," ETC., ETC.

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THE CATERPILLAR AND BUTTERFLY.

“LET me engage you as a nurse for my children,” said a Butterfly to a quiet Caterpillar who was strolling along a cabbage leaf in her odd, lumbering way.

“See these little eggs,” continued the Butterfly. “I don’t know how long it will be before they come to life and I am obliged to go on a dangerous and long journey, from which I may never return, and in that case who will take care of my baby butterflies when I am gone? Will you, green Caterpillar?”

“You will have to be very careful what you give them to eat; they will need early dew and honey from the flowers, and please let them fly about only a little at first for of course one cannot expect them to use their

wings properly all at once. I cannot think what made me come and lay my eggs on a cabbage leaf. Still, if I am not here you will be kind to my little ones, will you not?"

The Caterpillar had not even time to respond, before the Butterfly flew rapidly away, and she was left standing alone by the side of the eggs.

"Oh, why did she leave me to be a nurse for the lovely little butterflies," exclaimed the Caterpillar, "a poor crawling creature like me?"

However there lay the eggs on the cabbage leaf, and the green Caterpillar in the kindness of her heart resolved to do her best.

But she had no sleep that night, she was so very anxious. She walked all night long around her young charges, for fear some harm might come to them, and in the morning she said to herself: "I will consult some wise animal upon the matter and get advice. Two heads are certainly better than one."

But still there was a difficulty. Whom should the Caterpillar consult?

There was the shaggy dog, who sometimes came into the garden, but he would not be likely to know anything about a butterfly or its eggs. Then, too, there was the cat, who would sometimes sit at the foot of the apple tree basking himself in the sun and warming his fur, but he never talked with butterflies so his experience would not be of much use.

“I know what I’ll do,” at last said the Caterpillar, “I’ll see the lark,” and she fancied because he flew up so high and no one knew where he went to, that he must be very clever and know a great deal, for to go up very high, which she could never do, was the Caterpillar’s idea of happiness.

Now, in the neighboring cornfield, there lived a Lark. And the Caterpillar sent a message to him, to beg him to come and talk to her, and when he came she told him all of her difficulties and asked him what she was to do, to feed and care for

the little creatures so different from herself.

“Perhaps you will be able to inquire and learn something about it, next time you go up high,” observed the Caterpillar timidly.

The Lark said perhaps he would. Soon afterwards he went up into the bright, blue sky singing. By degrees his voice died away in the distance, till the green Caterpillar could not hear a sound. It is nothing to say she could not see him, for she had difficulty in looking upward at all, even when she reared herself most carefully, which she now did. But it was of no use. So she dropped upon her legs again and resumed her walk around the Butterfly’s eggs, nibbling a little bit of the cabbage leaf now and then as she moved along.

“What a time the Lark has been gone!” she cried at last. “I wonder where he is just now. I would give all my legs to know; he must have flown up higher than usual this time. I would like to know where it is

he goes to, and what he hears in the curious blue sky. He always sings in going up and coming down," and the green Caterpillar took another turn around the beautiful eggs.

At last the Lark's voice began to be heard again.

The Caterpillar almost jumped for joy, and it was not long before she saw her friend descend with hushed note, to the cabbage bed.

"News! news! Glorious news!" sang the Lark, "but I am afraid you will never believe me."

"I will believe anything you tell me," answered the Caterpillar eagerly.

"Very well, then; first of all, I will tell you what those little creatures are to eat," and the Lark nodded towards the eggs. "What do you think is to be given?"

"Dew and honey out of the flowers," said the Caterpillar.

"No, indeed, it is something simpler than that; something that you can get at quite easily."

“I can get quite easily at nothing but cabbage leaves,” murmured the Caterpillar in distress.

“Excellent, my good friend!” cried the Lark, exultingly, “you have found it out. You are to feed them with cabbage leaves.”

“Oh,” said the Caterpillar, “their mother’s last request to me was that I should ‘give them dew and honey from the flowers.’”

“Their mother knew nothing about the matter,” persisted the Lark. “Why Caterpillar, what do you think those little eggs will turn out to be?”

“Butterflies, to be sure,” said the Caterpillar.

“No, indeed; caterpillars!” sang the Lark, “and you’ll find it out in time,” and the Lark flew away.

“I thought the Lark was wise and kind,” observed the mild, green Caterpillar, once more beginning to walk around the eggs, “but I find he is not. Perhaps he went up too high this time; I still wonder whom he

sees, and what he sees up yonder; but here he comes again."

"I have something else to tell you," cried the Lark, "for the best of my news remains untold—and that is, that one day you will yourself be a butterfly."

"Ah! this *is* unkind; you jest with me," said the Caterpillar."

"I was afraid you would not believe me," said the Lark in his turn.

"I will believe you; but when you tell me that from butterflies' eggs come caterpillars, and that caterpillars leave off crawling, and get wings and become butterflies, it does not seem possible or even reasonable."

"Whether I hover over the cornfields of earth, or go far up into the heights of the sky, I see so many wonderful things, that there can be no reason why there should not be more. Oh, Caterpillar, it is because you never get beyond your cabbage leaf, that you call anything *impossible*." Just at that moment the Caterpillar felt something at

her side; she looked around—eight little green caterpillars were moving about, and had already made a show of a hole in the cabbage leaf. They had broken from the butterfly's eggs."

Amazement filled our green worm's heart, but joy soon followed, for as the first wonder was possible, the second one might be so too.

"Teach me your lesson, Lark," she said, and the Lark sang to her of the wonders of the earth below, and of the heavens above, and the Caterpillar talked the rest of her life of the time when she should be a butterfly.

But no one could realize it. She, however, had learned to believe, and when she was going into her chrysalis she said: "I know I shall some day be a butterfly."

For a long time the poor worm lay curled up in her dull, gray chrysalis, sound asleep or too dull to care to stir. However, one bright, spring day the sun shone so warm and the breezes sang so softly, and yet so

coaxingly, that the little worm woke up and began to stretch her head and then her body; still she stretched and stretched until the end of the cocoon broke off, and out came the same little worm's head. Soon the body crawled out too, but oh, how different! It now had great, yellow wings on it as soft as velvet and as light as a feather, and they could bear the little worm's body up, up so high that the tall tree tops were below her. Ah, how happy she was! By this time she looked down to the spot where the eggs had been left, and lo! there were little green worms crawling about on the cabbage leaf. "Never mind being worms now," she thought, "you, too, will be butterflies some time."

EASTER HYMN.

Beneath the soft, white snow so deep,
 Flowers and grasses sweetly sleep;
 Safe from winter's chill or pain
 They sleep and wait the warm, spring rain.

But soon the bright sun's glowing ray
 Will melt the snow and ice away,

Lovingly it will downward creep
And wake the flowers from their sleep.

Within our hearts, sometimes, you know,
Winter comes with ice and snow;
But love, the sunshine of the heart,
Bids it, with its chill, depart.

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